

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 are pending in the application. No claim amendments are presented, thus, no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Official Action, Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for failing to have proper antecedent basis; and Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Morse et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,802,296, hereinafter "Morse").

Claim 1 was again rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, because the Official Action asserts that the phrase "the data intact" fails to have proper antecedent basis. However, in the amendment filed November 3, 2004, Claim 1 was amended to recite "based on data left intact" instead of "based on the data left intact" in response to this rejection. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, be withdrawn. If, however, the amendment presented in the response of November 3, 2004, was not deemed sufficient to overcome the outstanding rejection, Applicants respectfully request that specific claim language that would result in a withdrawal of this rejection be provided in a subsequent communication.

The undersigned appreciatively acknowledges the courtesy extended by Examiner Nano and Primary Examiner Najjar by holding a personal interview with the undersigned on March 31, 2005. The substance of the interview is reflected in arguments and discussion presented below. No agreement was reached in the interview pending a formal response to the outstanding Official Action.

The outstanding Office Action asserts that Morse teaches all the elements of Claims 1-4. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Briefly recapitulating, in an exemplary, non-limiting example, the present application relates to filtering avatars, or virtual user identities, in a virtual environment. This allows users to share a virtual space with other avatars over a network, by allowing them to filter unwanted interactions initiated by another user's avatar. The processing for filtering out unwanted avatars takes place in user's processing device (client) which is connected through a network to a server containing the avatar virtual world and corresponding user profiles.

Unwanted avatars are registered by a user in the client device, and the information received from the server corresponding to the virtual environment is processed to determine if the received data includes data corresponding to one of the registered, unwanted avatars. If the received information includes data corresponding to an unwanted avatar, this data is filtered out, and the remaining information is processed by the client device to provide the shared virtual space. Therefore, the server maintaining the avatar virtual environment requires no modification to implement the present filtering process, as all processing is performed in the client device.

Alternatively, Morse describes a virtual environment in which users with avatar can be granted supervisory powers in a profile, which enhance the user's ability to control objects in the virtual world.¹ With these supervisory powers, a user may force another avatar to leave a specified virtual area, mute another avatar (i.e. prevent them from sending messages), and perform other similar functions.² Requests to perform these supervisory functions are transmitted from the client device (130) to a server (140), and upon receiving the request, the server alters the data stored in the server and the manner in which future requests from the affected avatar are processed.³ Therefore, all the processing functions performed in effecting

¹ Morse at col. 2, lines 64-66.

² Morse at col. 2, line 66 through col. 3, line 4.

³ Morse at col. 3, lines 14-24 and col. 4, lines 9-43.

the capabilities of specific avatars are performed in the server (140), based on instructions received from the supervisory user's client device (130).

The operation of the system described by Morse fundamentally differs from the claimed invention, as will be discussed below.

Claim 1 recites, *inter alia*,

“an information processing apparatus which is configured for connection to a server along with other information processing apparatuses through a network and which is supplied with a shared virtual space wherein avatars representing users remain active...”

In rejecting this claimed feature the Official Action cites, col. 2, line 20-col. 3, line 5, of Morse. This portion of Morse describes that a plurality of client devices (130) and a server (140) are connected over a network, and the server (140) is configured to provide a virtual world to the client devices (130). The server (140) in Morse, is not ***configured to be connected to another server***, nor is it configured to be ***supplied*** with shared virtual space. Therefore, the only apparatus described by Morse that could be reasonably considered similar to the information processing apparatus, as recited in Claim 1, might be the client device (130). However, Claim 1 does not read on the client device described by Morse because Morse's client device fails to teach or suggest various features recited in Claim 1, as discussed below.

Moreover, Claim 1 recites an information processing apparatus configured for ***connection to a server*** which is ***supplied with a shared virtual space***, “...***said information processing apparatus, comprising:***” Accordingly, the server apparatus (140) of Morse can not reasonably be considered analogous to the information processing apparatus recited in the preamble of Claim 1. However, the outstanding Official Action repeatedly refers, in error, to the aspects of the server device (140) of Morse as anticipating the further limitations recited in Claim 1. Applicants respectfully submit that the information processing device recited in

Claim 1, can not possibly be construed as corresponding to the server (140) described by Morse.

Claim 1 further recites, *inter alia*, said information processing apparatus comprising:

“a registering unit configured to register any of said avatars as an object to be filtered out in a predetermined storage area...”

The outstanding Official Action cites col. 2, line-col. 3, line 5, of Morse as disclosing the above-cited limitation. The cited portion of Morse, however, describes only that a user and her corresponding avatar may have supervisory powers to control objects in the virtual world, by changing the way that the server handles the affected avatar. The supervisory avatar may force another avatar to exit the virtual world, mute another avatar or prevent another avatar from speaking. However, as described at col. 7, lines 22-31 of Morse, such supervisory powers are applied by sending a message from the user's client device (130) to a server (140) and the server performs the requested supervisory functions. As discussed above, the server described by Morse does not correspond to the information processing device, as recited in Claim 1, and Morse fails to teach or suggest that the client device includes structure remotely analogous to the registering unit, as cited above.

However, even if the information processing apparatus recited in Claim 1 were to be considered as analogous to the server described in Morse, the entirety of Morse fails to teach or suggest that the server or the client device includes a registering unit configured to register any of said avatars as an object to be filtered out in a predetermined storage area, as recited in Claim 1. Morse simply describes that a data structure corresponding to an avatar may be altered based on a received message, and the manner in which the avatar is processed at the server may be affected by the change in data structure. At no point does Morse teach or suggest that the server or client device include any structure to store an avatar as an object to be filtered out, as recited in Claim 1.

Claim 1 further recites, *inter alia*, said information processing apparatus comprising:

“...a determining unit configured to determine whether said received data includes data representative of any avatar as an object to be filtered out...”

In rejection this limitation, the outstanding Official Action cites col. 7, lines 22-31, of Morse. As stated above, this portion of Morse describes only that a client device operated by a user is able to transmit a message to the server in order to enforce its supervisory powers to affect the activities of another avatar. Again, the client device (130) performs no processing functions other than to simply send a message to the server (140), and therefore Morse fails to teach or suggest this claimed limitation.

However, even if the information processing apparatus recited in Claim 1 were to be considered as analogous to the server described in Morse, the entirety of Morse fails to teach or suggest that the server or client device includes a determining unit configured to determine whether said received data includes data representative of any avatar as an object to be filtered out, as recited in Claim 1. Instead, Morse describes that the manner in which an avatar is processed at the server may be affected by the change in data structure, based on a message received from a supervisory user. At no point, however, does Morse teach or suggest that the server or the client device include a determining unit configured to determine whether said received data includes data representative *of any avatar as an object to be filtered out*, as recited in Claim 1.

Claim 1 further recites, *inter alia*, set information processing apparatus comprising:

“a filtering unit configured to delete the data to be filtered out from said received data...”

In rejecting this limitation, the outstanding Official Action again cites col. 7, lines 22-31 of Morse. However, as discussed above, Morse fails to teach or suggest a filtering unit configured to delete the data to be filtered out from said data, which is received data, much

less performing such a function in the client device (130). Instead, Morse describes that messages are sent from a client device (130) to the server (140) and the server (140) then actively changes or affects the processing performed on messages or actions received from the affected avatar.⁴ Again, the client device (130) performs no processing functions other than to simply send a message to the server (140), and therefore Morse fails to teach or suggest this claimed limitation.

However, even if the information processing apparatus recited in Claim 1 were to be considered as analogous to the server described in Morse, the entirety of Morse fails to teach or suggest that the server or the client device include a *filtering unit configured to delete the data to be filtered out from said received data*, as recited in Claim 1. Instead, Morse describes that the manner in which the avatar is processed at the server may be affected by the change in data structure of the server, in response to a message received from a supervisory user. At no point, however, does Morse teach or suggest that the server or the client device includes a filtering unit configured to delete any received data to be filtered out from received data, as recited in Claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn. As Claims 3 and 4 recite substantially the same subject matter as Claim 1, and Claim 2 depends from Claim 1, Applicants submit that these claims also patentably define over Morse.

Should the above distinctions be found unpersuasive, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner provide an explanation via Advisory Action pursuant to MPEP § 714.13 specifically rebutting the points raised herein for purposes of facilitating the appeal process.

⁴ Morse at col. 7, lines 14-60.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 1-4 patentably distinguishes over the prior art. The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of the application is therefore requested.

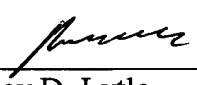
Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

Customer Number

22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)
GJM/ATH:aif



Bradley D. Lytle
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 40,073

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